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By John Toole

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WINDHAM – William Marino will get some long overdue Army medals this afternoon at Town Hall.

Town Hall had something to do with it. But so did his grandson Hunter.

Marino needs the medals as proof of military service at the outset of the Vietnam War to qualify for a property tax break. Otherwise, the town can't grant the tax break.

"It's a \$500 rebate on my taxes," Marino said. "That's not a lot, but I think I deserve it."

Marino, an Army veteran, spent four months in the Philippines in support of U.S. operations in Vietnam.

"I went down to the Philippines to cover one of our units that went in there," Marino said.

Among the medals he will receive is the National Defense Service Medal.

"I got out in 1961," he said. "My discharge didn't have those things on it."

Few people to this day are aware of the nation's early involvement in Vietnam, which began under President Kennedy, Marino said.

To track down the medals, Marino enlisted the help of Congressman Charles Bass and his staff. Bass is scheduled to be at Town Hall for the brief presentation ceremony.

Marino characterized their efforts on his behalf as "excellent."

He didn't see action in the field in Vietnam. He served with the Army Security Agency.

"We were in Army intelligence," Marino said.

While the tax break was the motivating reason for pursuing the medals, Marino said grandson Hunter, 9, also has been an inspiration.

Hunter had seen military medals of other family members and asked his grandfather, "Don't you have some medals?"

Hunter is in school and isn't expected to attend the ceremony this afternoon, but there is little doubt the two will be looking over the medals together later.

"My grandson is very interested," Marino said.

Marino didn't rise far in the Army chain of command. He attained the rank of specialist fifth class.

But he values the experience.

"It gained me the two best friends I have had in 55 years," Marino said.

The Army also gave him some life lessons.

"It gave me good perspective on how to be patient," he said.

Bass aide Leigh Ann Shriver said it's a privilege to help veterans like Marino obtain their military honors.

"He's been a gentleman," Shriver said.

Marino and wife, Susan, are Massachusetts natives. He is from Arlington. She is from Dorchester.

Marino's path through life has taken him through the insurance business, the corporate world, the courts and college administration. He has an undergraduate degree from Harvard, and an MBA and law degree from Suffolk.

He's still active at age 77, teaching an online legal course for the University of Maryland, and has no plans to retire soon.

"I'm not quitting," Marino said.